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National Policing
Improvement Agency

CITIZEN FOCUS AND
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POLICING
PROGRAMME

Citizen Focus and Neighbourhood Policing Programme

national **AGENCY** POLICING

Executive Report

**Twelve-month Progress Report on
the PCSO Review recommendations**

August 2009



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Executive Report

The Progress Report looks at the activities that have been undertaken nationally and locally to progress the 22 recommendations outlined in the PCSO Review published in July 2008.

The contribution that Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) have made has been noted by many. Introduced under the Police Reform Act 2002 to increase the police presence on the streets, provide reassurance to the public and free up the time of regular police officers for the tasks which require a higher level of training and skills, they are now fundamentally embedded within neighbourhood teams working alongside other police colleagues on issues of principal concern to the communities they serve. Often these relate to issues of low-level crime and anti-social behaviour which the police found it difficult to commit adequate attention to prior to the introduction of neighbourhood policing teams and PCSOs.

Over 16,500 PCSOs now work closely with the public across England and Wales and are firmly embedded as a central tenet of neighbourhood policing. Following a swift introduction over a short period, however, a variance in the role, function, purpose and powers of PCSOs across forces threatened to undermine the full impact of PCSOs.

The initial PCSO Review was commissioned with a view to addressing these concerns. It took place between January and March 2008 with the report being published in July 2008 including 22 recommendations. The NPIA agreed to review progress across all 43 forces in England and Wales in relation to these recommendations.

In November 2008 the NPIA's Citizen Focus and Neighbourhood Policing (CF&NP) Programme requested forces to provide an update by means of a template questionnaire. All 43 forces in England and Wales completed and returned the template by mid-December.

The Progress Report looks at the activities that have been undertaken nationally and locally to progress the 22 recommendations outlined in the PCSO Review published in July 2008. It incorporates the findings from the short ACPO survey of forces on powers. Eighteen of the 22 recommendations have been discharged. Progress has been made on the remaining four recommendations, although further action is needed by forces in relation to recommendations 7 and 17, by the NPIA in relation to recommendation 2 and by the Tripartite in relation to recommendation 22. In addition to specific monitoring of recommendations needing further work, the NPIA will continue to monitor all recommendations to ensure that the good progress made is sustained. The NPIA will contact forces in late 2009 in relation to those recommendations needing further work. Specific progress is outlined under each recommendation.

1. ROLE

Recommendation 1:

Forces to adopt the role and principles for PCSOs.

Status: Discharged

The issue of 'boundary stretching' had been noted across forces in relation to the activities PCSOs were undertaking. In order to ensure that PCSOs became more aligned to a core purpose and role, a set of principles were developed and forces were asked to adopt these.

Although a minority of forces need to make minor adjustments in order to comply with the requirements, these are due to have been completed by mid-2009. This recommendation has therefore been discharged.

Recommendation 2:

The NPIA consider with the tripartite partners whether further evaluation of the use of PCSOs is required.

Status: Ongoing – further work needed by the NPIA

56% (24 forces) have carried out an evaluation of the role, impact or benefit (in the areas outlined in the recommendation) of PCSOs either force wide or locally. The recommendation to provide evaluation of the PCSO role came on the back of other national developments which will directly impact the work of neighbourhood policing teams.

The Flanagan Review of Policing acknowledged the integral role that PCSOs played in the implementation of neighbourhood policing, the Policing Green Paper 'From the Neighbourhood to the National', whilst endorsing the contribution made by PCSOs, made recommendations impacting on the wider neighbourhood policing agenda, as did Louise Casey's 'Engaging Communities in Fighting Crime' Review.

These developments, coupled with the further embedding of PCSOs within neighbourhood policing teams, have moved the debate beyond a separate evaluation towards the contribution made by NPTs to the single confidence target. Although the focus is now on the wider Neighbourhood Policing Team rather than PCSOs specifically, further work is needed by the NPIA to monitor the effectiveness of PCSOs through its informal monitoring and support mechanisms (e.g., National PCSO Practitioners Group, Community of Practice collaborative platform).

2. POWERS

Recommendation 3:

Forces should review currently designated powers to ensure they are all required and used by their PCSOs.

Status: Discharged

The variation in the designation and use of PCSO powers between forces led to some confusion and misunderstanding amongst the public and was negatively portrayed in some sections of the national media. Although there is currently a standard list of 20 powers for all PCSOs, there are a number of discretionary powers that can also be designated by a chief officer in addition to numerous local authority by-laws.

In response to this, forces were asked to review all designated powers to ensure they were used or required. 81% (35 forces) complied with this request. As most forces have undertaken a review of powers (as well as responding to the ACPO Powers Audit outlined in recommendation 4) this recommendation has been discharged.

Recommendation 4:

Following the Home Office powers audit, the NPIA will work with forces and the Home Office to: consider additional and/or alternative powers and seek to resolve any anomalies.

Status: Discharged – subject to follow up work by ACPO and any changes brought about by any further announcement by the Home Secretary

At the same time as the NPIA Progress Report consultation, ACPO requested forces to provide information on PCSO powers by means of a template questionnaire. Thirty-seven forces completed and returned the questionnaire by mid-December.

Over 60% of responding Forces (53% of all Forces) identified that just over half of the powers available, including two standard powers were inappropriate for use by their PCSOs. The two standard powers were:

- photographing persons who were subject of an FPN, or detained persons, away from the station, and
- power to seize drugs and require name and address for possession of drugs.

40% of responding forces (35% of all forces) highlighted concerns and issues in relation to the power to use force in relation to detained persons. Just under 20% of forces identified difficulties in relation to issuing Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) for local authority offences as they felt this prevented them from dealing with local low level anti-social behaviour.

Many of the discretionary powers are not used and two of the standard powers were highlighted as problematic ('photographing persons subject of an FPN or detained persons away from the station' and 'power to seize drugs and require name and address for possession of drugs'). In relation to the power to photograph offenders away from a police station, some forces requested this be moved into the discretionary list as it is used very rarely and conflicted with many forces' policies.

ACPO will write to forces to follow up on any further issues. We await further information on any announcement by the Home Secretary in relation to PCSO powers.

Recommendation 5:

The NPIA will work with forces to ensure that suitable training and awareness is available at all levels of the service in the role, deployment and powers of PCSOs.

Status: Discharged – subject to continued monitoring by the NPIA

The Review identified the need to ensure suitable training and awareness was available in relation to the role, deployment and powers of PCSOs.

There have been some developments nationally to support forces to improve communications and share good practice. The NPIA CF&NP's Forward To Basics regional events have brought together forces to share example of 'what is working'; there have been further developments in training (outlined in section 4 of the report) including work on NCALT, IPLDP and WPLDP. The NPIA CF&NP's *Neighbourhood Policing in Rural Communities Guide* and *Business Guide* have included information on PCSOs and their involvement in neighbourhood policing.

The Neighbourhood Policing website (www.neighbourhoodpolicing.co.uk) already contains documents, guidance and best practice case studies which support the work of PCSOs. This will be supplemented over the next year by two collaborative platforms: 1) the Improvement and Development Agency's website (www.idea.gov.uk) which already hosts a PCSO Community of Practice, and 2) the NPIA Collaborative Platform (due to be launched in 2009) which will support this recommendation through 'communities of practice' including blogs, forums, wikis and a document library.

There have been some developments, both at a national and local level, to progress this recommendation. There are some areas in which the NPIA and other agencies may be able to support forces further including more web-based good practice which the NPIA is currently developing. The NPIA will continue to monitor forces' activities in relation to this recommendation.

3. SELECTION

Recommendation 6:

Forces should recruit to defined National Standards using the national application form (long or short version) and the Integrated Competency Framework (ICF) behaviours agreed as core to the PCSO role.

Status: Discharged – subject to continued monitoring by the NPIA

In April 2006 the Home Office introduced a national selection process for PCSOs which comprised a national application form and assessment centres. The full version of the national application form for PCSOs was introduced in December 2007 with a shorter form also available. The process was established to ensure consistency in recruiting standards; however, the take-up of this system, especially the assessment centre element, had been low.

79% (34 forces) are now using the national recruitment application form. Reasons given from forces not using the form included: prohibitive costs, the form being overly bureaucratic or too comprehensive for the role being recruited (i.e., some areas give PCSOs very limited powers) or the limited numbers they are now recruiting in comparison to before.

95% (41 forces) are using the Integrated Competency Framework (ICF) behaviours core to the PCSO role. Reasons from forces for not currently using ICF behaviours included: PCSOs having limited powers or only filling a community support role making their use too burdensome, awaiting the national Review before moving forward, and having too few staff to warrant the national SEARCH[®] model which was perceived to be very resource intensive.

The NPIA is currently conducting an appraisal of the Police SEARCH[®] Recruit Assessment Centre (RAC) and the Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) Recruit Assessment Process (RAP), as part of their ongoing enhancement, with the aim being to conduct an evaluation of the benefits that could be gained from further alignment of the two processes.

A high proportion of forces are now using the national recruitment application form, although over 20% are still not using either the short or long version of the form. The majority of forces are utilising the ICF behaviours. This recommendation has therefore been discharged subject to continued monitoring by the NPIA.

4. TRAINING

Recommendation 7:

Forces should adopt the Wider Police Learning and Development Programme (WPLDP) product by April 2009. (In the interim, forces who have not should ensure their product meets the learning outcomes of the WPLDP product).

Status: Ongoing - further work needed by forces

The NPIA has developed a national training product for PCSOs contained within the Wider Police Learning and Development Programme (WPLDP). Nationally, there has been inconsistency in adoption of the WPLDP product. This is due to many forces developing their own products to meet local need at a time of high recruitment.

Only 30% (13 forces) have now implemented the WPLDP. Of those forces who had not done so, 33% (10 forces) intended to implement the WPLDP by April 2009 and 47% (14 forces) did not.

There is low compliance by forces to the WPLDP, although some forces intended to adopt the WPLDP package during 2009. It is evident from forces that they are keen to use their existing training programmes wherever possible and make amendments to these in order to comply with the learning descriptors rather than adopt the national model outright at this stage. There appears to be some misunderstanding about the requirements and content of the WPLDP within forces which may be contributing to the low level of take-up of the product. Recent developments in relation to IPLDP, to which the WPLDP is aligned, as well as the National PCSO qualification may help increase the proportion of forces using the national training model. Further work is therefore needed by forces.

Recommendation 8:

Forces should ensure that tutoring for new PCSOs is done by trained PCSO tutors.

Status: Discharged – subject to continued monitoring by the NPIA

A case was made within the Review for PCSOs to be tutored by other PCSOs who had been selected and trained for a tutoring role. It was argued that such an approach would afford a means of lateral development for experienced PCSOs and could potentially attract a reward or recognition payment for the additional responsibility.

31 forces (72%) are using PCSOs to tutor other PCSOs. Of those that do not currently have PCSO tutors some use either police constables or PCSOs that

have not received PCSO tutor training. There is wide variation in how PCSO tutoring is undertaken, whether PCSO tutors have received any formal training or whether they received additional recompense for the work that they do. However, as a majority of forces are compliant with the recommendation the recommendation has been discharged subject to continued monitoring by the NPIA.

Recommendation 9:

Forces should review their refresher training to ensure it includes elements on problem solving and engagement.

Status: Discharged – subject to continued monitoring by the NPIA

In previous years most forces focused only on initial PCSO training due to the need to recruit significant numbers of PCSOs over a limited period. This resulted in a gap in ongoing or refresher training for PCSOs. Many forces are now actively seeking to address this need. Research continues to show the importance of engagement and problem solving activity to achieve the outcomes of neighbourhood policing.

74% (32 forces) have reviewed their refresher training to include elements on problem solving and engagement. A need was identified by one force to formalise and structure the content of PCSO refresher training to ensure a more consistent approach to the professional development of PCSOs. Due to high compliance this recommendation has been discharged subject to continued monitoring by the NPIA.

5. CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Recommendation 10:

Forces should consider the adoption of a national NVQ developed between the NPIA and Skills for Justice and/or the CLDP Neighbourhood Policing module.

Status: Discharged – subject to continued monitoring by the NPIA

The Review reinforced the view that there was a lack of career development opportunities for PCSOs, with staff turnover presenting risks to the potential benefits of PCSOs whose role is primarily to work within the community where they are highly visible and where there is a need and expectation that relationships and knowledge will develop over time.

63% (27 forces) provided comments in relation to the NVQ element of this recommendation. The new Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF), building on the recommendation to develop a national qualification (NVQ), offers an opportunity to develop a role-specific qualification that is fully aligned to the associated qualification for officers completing IPLDP. A nationally agreed qualification should be available by October 2009. There are forces, however, who have developed individual approaches in these areas.

There was mixed feedback in relation to the Core Leadership and Development Programme (CLDP), with 37% (16 forces) using the Neighbourhood Policing module for PCSOs, 23% (10 forces) stating they did not, and 40% (17) saying it was not applicable. This recommendation is discharged subject to continued monitoring by the NPIA.

Recommendation 11:

The NPIA should develop a national strategy for the recognition of Accredited Prior Experience and Learning (APEL) for PCSOs transferring to become police officers.

Status: Discharged

Some forces have developed their own qualifications and a 'Fast Track' process for PCSOs to become PCs which shortens the application and training periods for the high proportion of PCSOs wishing to join as fully fledged officers. Rather than a national strategy being produced, the development of the National Qualification for PCSOs by the NPIA, due to be launched in October 2009, should help to standardise the assessment process nationally and contribute to the process of accrediting prior experience and learning. This recommendation has therefore been discharged.

6. SUPERVISION

Recommendation 12:

Forces should ensure supervision of PCSOs is provided by police Sergeants working as part of a Neighbourhood Policing Team.

Status: Discharged

The current ACPO guidance states that, although day to day direction and tasking can be provided by a Police Constable, the responsibility for supervision remains with a uniformed Sergeant operating within the Neighbourhood Policing Team. The Review concluded that the current position be maintained with PCSOs being supervised by Sergeants within Neighbourhood Policing Teams. However, it was accepted that in some forces Neighbourhood Team Constables were involved in the tasking, deployment and direction of PCSOs as part of their dedicated beat officer role.

PCSOs are supervised by NPT Sergeants in 95% (41) of forces. There are a few very minor anomalies to this which can be addressed directly with the relevant forces. PCSO Supervisors are also used in at least two forces. However, this recommendation has been discharged due to strong compliance overall.

Recommendation 13:

Forces should review their existing supervision ratios to ensure these are realistic and in line with good practice.

Status: Discharged

63% (27 forces) have reviewed their supervision ratios since March 2008. In many cases, however, it was unclear what supervision ratio existed in each force. Forces that had not reviewed ratios generally did not provide reasons for not doing so. There is currently no nationally recommended supervision ratio for PCSOs against which forces can benchmark themselves although a ratio of 1:8 is considered reasonable. Due to high compliance this recommendation has been discharged.

7. UNIFORM

Recommendation 14:

Forces adopt the principles related to PCSO uniform by September 2008.

Status: Discharged – subject to continued monitoring by the ACPO Uniform Working Group

ACPO guidance outlines that PCSOs should be recognisable to the public as police staff, but visibly distinct from regular police officers. The Review highlighted some variations in uniform and approach and revealed a consensus that the PCSO should be clearly recognisable as such by the public and distinct from a police officer.

The Review concluded that to set a standard uniform for PCSOs was unrealistic and the potential cost implications would be prohibitive. It therefore proposed a set of principles with certain elements specified to ensure a common approach and appearance.

58% (25 forces) stated that they were complying with the full set of principles relating to PCSO uniform. 42% (18 forces) were not complying with one or more of the identifying features (plain blue hat band, epaulettes and tie). An even higher proportion complied with the first three principles. This recommendation has therefore been discharged subject to monitoring by the ACPO Uniform Working Group.

Recommendation 15:

Future issues relating to PCSO uniform should be referred to the ACPO Police Uniform Working Group.

Status: Discharged

The Review recommended that any future issues relating to PCSO uniform should be referred to the reconstituted ACPO Police Uniform Working Group to ensure a consistent approach. The ACPO Police Uniform Working Group (referred to as the ACPO Uniform Appointments Board in the previous Review) is a strategic group with a Specification and Design Group that sits underneath it. Forces are supportive of this move and the recommendation has therefore been discharged.

8. PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT(PPE)

Recommendation 16:

The NPIA should provide guidance in operational risk assessment to ensure that decision making and control measures are consistent.

Status: Discharged – subject to publication of NPIA guidance

The Review found that, although all forces had risk assessments for deployment of PCSOs and that most forces managed risk using the primary control measures of appropriate training, deployment restrictions and management control, some forces made different decisions and implemented different control measures having identified the same or similar risks.

The NPIA is currently producing general risk guidance which will be relevant to PCSOs. The initial focus for the guidance was on managing violence-related risks, but an increasing spotlight on the Police Service's response to risk (e.g., from Flanagan's 'Review of Policing') signalled a need for the subject to be approached from a more general perspective.

Work is underway to deliver three distinct products by late summer 2009. It is hoped that forces will start to align their risk assessment practices to the model once it is available, including PCSO assessments as part of the process. This recommendation has therefore been discharged subject to publication of the NPIA guidance.

Recommendation 17:

Forces should conduct a full risk assessment around PPE issued to PCSOs, which is aligned to the corporate role and expectations of PCSOs as set out in Recommendation 1.

Status: Ongoing - further work needed by forces

Current ACPO guidance allows for forces to determine what level of personal protective equipment is allocated to PCSOs. The guidance states that protective vests have become common place and forces should consider issuing this equipment in light of local health and safety assessments.

The Review concluded that the issue of PPE should remain a matter for individual Chief Officers through their risk assessment process and that forces should establish effective arrangements to ensure risk assessments are refreshed and properly managed.

Although the publication of nationally agreed risk guidance, as outlined under recommendation 16, should help standardise forces' approaches to making assessments of PPE allocations in the future, almost half of all forces (49%; 21 forces) had not undertaken a risk assessment since the publication of the Review in July 2008. Further work is needed by forces although the NPIA can monitor forces' use of the NPIA guidance to ascertain whether risk assessments are made in the future.

Recommendation 18:

Forces should ensure a clear training programme for PCSOs in personal safety and conflict management/resolution.

Status: Discharged

The Review highlighted that PCSOs felt they did not receive sufficient training, especially refresher training, in personal safety and conflict management/resolution. Some inconsistencies were found across forces in this area and the Review felt that forces should ensure the establishment of an appropriate training strategy to address these needs. This recommendation has been complied with by all forces and can be discharged.

9. AGE

Recommendation 19:

Forces should employ PCSOs over the age of 18 years.

Status: Discharged

No force employs any PCSOs under the age of 18. One force stated that they sometimes recruited officers at age 17 but ensured they were 18 before being posted to the Basic Command Unit. This recommendation has therefore been discharged.

10. OTHER ISSUES

Recommendation 20:

The NPIA, with the support of the Tripartite, should work together to raise public awareness of the role of the PCSO in neighbourhood policing.

Status: Discharged

There have been several recent developments in relation to highlighting the work of neighbourhood policing teams and PCSOs nationally. The NPIA has continued to promote the PCSO of the Year Award and has published several guidance documents including a PCSO Practitioner Guide and, more recently, a 'Rural Communities' and 'Business Guide'. These highlight the work of neighbourhood teams, including the PCSO role.

In line with the decision not to pursue a national campaign solely for PCSOs, the work of PCSOs is being covered by a more general communications campaign entitled 'Justice Seen, Justice Done'. Launched in March 2009, it is using a variety of methods, both nationally and locally, to communicate aspects of neighbourhood policing. Due to these developments this recommendation has been discharged.

Recommendation 21:

Forces should seek to increase awareness of the role of PCSOs internally.

Status: Discharged

98% (42) of forces have taken action to increase awareness of PCSOs internally. Some good examples were given by forces in relation to raising

awareness of PCSOs internally and it is evident that internal awareness of the PCSO role is improving.

Forces have used a range of methods including: reviewing training given to all new entrants to ensure all are given an understanding of the role and undertaking internal communications campaigns including newsletters, posters, bespoke briefings for teams, poster campaigns, the intranet and dedicated micro-sites, PCSO conferences and presentations, integrating training with other pillars of policing, and involving a Citizen Focus Officer with a focus on PCSOs. It is evident therefore that internal awareness of the PCSO role is improving although further work may be needed to ensure increased awareness of the role. This recommendation has therefore been discharged.

Recommendation 22:

The Tripartite partners consider how to address the issue of financial sustainability beyond 2008/09.

Status: Ongoing - further work needed by the Tripartite

Financial support has been guaranteed until 2010/2011. However, discussions are needed to discuss funding beyond this date, to determine whether neighbourhood policing funding is sustainable and whether a mixture of funding sources needs to be considered in future. The APA and Home Office will work together to look at future funding issues and possible ways forward.

Conclusion

The NPIA has undertaken the Progress Report on behalf of the Tripartite. The recommendations made as part of the Review in July 2008 were challenging with some requiring more activity than others.

Eighteen of the 22 recommendations have been discharged. Progress has been made on the remaining four recommendations. Further action is needed by forces in relation to recommendations 7 and 17, and by the Tripartite in relation to recommendations 2 and 22. The NPIA will continue to monitor all recommendations and will contact forces in late 2009 in relation to those specific recommendations needing further work.

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Contact us

For further information, please contact us at:

National Policing Improvement Agency

Citizen Focus and Neighbourhood Policing Programme
10 Victoria Street, 3rd Floor – Westminster Wing
London SW1H 0NN

T: 020 7147 8026

E: cfnpp@npia.pnn.police.uk

www.npia.police.uk

www.neighbourhoodpolicing.co.uk



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